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REVERENCE

IN THE

HOUSE OF GOD.

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Reverence in the House of God.

It becomes us, at the very threshold of God's House, to solemnize our thoughts, and show our reverence,—to uncover our heads *at the outer porch*, even of so holy a place;—to enter soberly—yea, solemnly—such sacred precincts—discarding levity, laying aside indifference—

"And make ourselves all reverence and fear."

The Church, we may be well assured, is not the place for the pride, and pomp and parade of the world; but for humility, solemnity, piety and devotion, in all we think, in all we do, in every way in which we may comport ourselves. It is the injunction of the pious Herbert—

"Quit thy state:
All are equal within the Church's gate."

There can properly be no worldly distinctions carried into the peculiar presence of the Most High. *All are equal there.* "Of a truth, God is no respecter of persons." And to the congregations of His worshipping people, "high and low, rich and poor, one with another," all are alike in His sight. To import, then, into such a place, the frivolities of fashion, were surely wrong. *He*, be it never forgotten, is "there in the midst of you." We have it on His own gracious assurance, that

the Lord is there. How humbly, then, how modestly, how gravely, how reverently ought we to go into His presence, and to conduct ourselves before Him!

Nor can it, for a moment, be excused that any should come *late*, on so great and holy an occasion as that of meeting the Lord God in the service of His sanctuary. It would be deemed an insult in social life, to disregard the time appointed for an ordinary engagement: how much more offensive to God, to slight the hour of our appointment with Him, and be neglectful of even a part of the service we go to pay to His Glorious Majesty! O, that we all might act out, in this respect, the holy sentiment of the saintly Herbert!—

> "Think, when the bells do chime,
> 'Tis angels' music: therefore come not late,—
> God then deals blessings: if a king did so,
> Who would not haste?"

It is most desirable to be there before the service begins, that we may have a few moments for recollection, and for private prayer. We have entered a holy place; we are in the more immediate presence of the Most High; we are about to engage in the worship of His Divine Majesty,—it is on every account, therefore, most important that we should have time to reflect upon what we are going to do, and to prepare our minds for the devout discharge of so solemn and sacred a duty. By lateness, moreover, we miss a most essential part of the service; we lose the opportunity of uniting in the General Confession, and of receiving the Declaration of Absolution, or Remission of Sins,—to say nothing of our disturbing those who are already imploring mercy and forgiveness of their Almighty Father. We

all need this exercise, and this blessing; and it is a serious thing to slight the opportunity of enjoying it.

> "For holy offices we have a time—a time
> To think upon the part of business."

Every thing in its season, and its place. And when we go to engage in the Public Worship of the Almighty, we should give ourselves up to it wholly, unreservedly, earnestly. This world, with all its pomps and vanities, its business and its pleasures, should be effectually shut out. There can be no reverencing His Sanctuary where such is not the case. It is an awful mockery of God to trifle with such a subject as this. His eye is upon us; and it is dreadful to think that, while He is waiting to be gracious, we should be provoking His displeasure.

When the Holy Service is done, retire from the Holy Place in silence; meditate upon thy blessings; shut out the world, and walk with God.

> "Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,
> With all thy quickening powers;
> Kindle a flame of sacred love
> In these cold hearts of ours.
>
> "See how we grovel here below,
> Fond of these earthly toys:
> Our souls, how heavily they go,
> To reach eternal joys.
>
> "Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,
> With all thy quickening powers;
> Come, shed abroad a Saviour's love,
> And that shall kindle ours."